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ABSTRACT

Rural poverty causes implementation of P.L. 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, to be uniquely different from urban implementation. Rural areas may try to emulate urban policies, where it is possible to identify and group severely handicapped children for appropriate services, but in rural areas the availability of specialists and classroom space influences policymaking. This paper reexamines the theory of street-level bureaucracy as it pertains to implementing P.L. 94-142 in rural areas. The theory of "street-level" bureaucracy concerns the interaction between policy implementor and the target of policy, with a focus on the implementor's procedural actions and decisions. The theory, originally applied to urban contexts, is extended in this paper to rural contexts. The paper considers the relationship of rural poverty and street-level (or "country road" -level) bureaucracy as they affect special education policy for students with severe disabilities. This paper applies the literature in systems theory and social policy to data and analyses from a previous field study. Emerging theoretical propositions imply that the recipient of the policy is actually the policymaker and developer and that the "country road"-level bureaucrat's response to policy has a negative effect both for systems and implementation. This paper contains 47 references. (ALL)

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Country Road-Level Bureaucracy:
Special Education in the Context of Rural Poverty

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Running Head: COUNTRY ROAD-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY

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Abstract

This research re-examines the theory of street-level bureaucracy with an emphasis on the implementation of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 in the context of a rural poverty setting. The study considers the non-urban poverty context and resultant "country road"-level bureaucracy as they impact upon special education policy within the school day of students with severe disabilities. The paper includes a consideration of literature in systems theory and social policy, applied to data and analyses resulting from a previous field study. Emerging theoretical propositions suggest the recipient of policy is actually the policy maker and developer, and the country road-level bureaucrats' response to policy has a negative impact at both the systems and microlevel of implementation.

Country Road-Level Bureaucracy:

Special Education in the Context of Rural Poverty

This paper investigates the impact of social policy on the daily lives of the people for whom it was intended, and explores issues related to the implementation process within the context of nonurban, low socioeconomic class settings. The conceptual framework of the investigation, analysis, and interpretation is drawn from the work on street level bureaucracy (Lipsky 1976, 1980; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977). The study centers on the total context of the policy situation and extends the premise of street-level bureaucracy from the "street-level bureaucrat" to the intended recipient of policy. In this study, the focus is special education policy as it is implemented for students with severe disabilities, emanating from Public Law (P.L.) 94-142, The Educational for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. The environmental context for this study of special education policy is rural, low socioeconomic class, public school districts.

This paper seeks to extend the theory of street-level bureaucracy in both its context and unit of analysis. The original analytic focus in studies of

street-level bureaucracy was the interaction between the policy implementor and the target of policy, with a focus on the implementor's procedural actions and decisions in an urban context. In contrast, the emphasis of this study was on the school day of the student with severe disabilities in an impoverished rural school environment, as a recipient of the policy of a country-road level bureaucrat.

To begin to understand country road-level bureaucracies, the paper first reviews current education issues related to disadvantaged students and special education. Second, the paper examines related educational theory and policy, and builds on the theory of street-level bureaucracy which emanated in part, from Weatherley and Lipsky's (1977) study of state special education reform. Elements of street-level bureaucracy which pertain specifically to low socioeconomic class situations are highlighted. Third, the field study which supports the theoretical propositions is briefly described, then the paper suggests that, in the country road-level bureaucracy, it is the policy recipient, in this case, the student with severe disabilities, who is the maker of policy. Next, the country road-level

bureaucrat's response to policy is examined, which includes ignoring existing rural policy and emulating urban services. Finally, policy outcomes within country road-level bureaucracies are highlighted, identifying both systemic and microlevel outcomes.

Current Issues in Education

The current educational agenda of the nation reflects considerable concern for the increasing proportion of children from minority groups, and the growing number of children from households below the poverty line (Hodgkinson, 1988). Professionals have outlined issues and strategies for working with persons with severe special needs who attend rural schools (Budde, 1983; Condon, 1983; Helge, 1984a, 1986; Singer, 1984; Snart, 1985; Tawney, 1979) or students with mild disabilities who attend schools in culturally different settings (Cegelka, Lewis, Rodriguez, & Pacheco, 1986; Chinn, 1984; Johnson & Ramirez, 1987; Kitano & Chinn, 1986; Plata, 1982; Ramirez & Ortiz, 1988; Valero-Figueira, 1988). However, no recent studies have recognized the concern for students with severe disabilities whose risk of educational failure is at a minimum, often doubled, by being members of social and familial situations which

place them at risk for educational failure. Moreover, no studies have considered the specific variable of poverty apart from the cultural and rural context of special education research.

P.L. 94-142 mandated that all public schools provide a free, appropriate, public education, in the least restrictive environment, for all students with disabilities. Yet, over a decade after passage of the Act, it was determined that students with severe disabilities were often unserved or underserved, and were most in need of improved services (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1987). Rural schools in particular have been targeted as needing specific improvements in serving students with severe disabilities (OSERS, 1987) and rural administrators affirm that these students are the most difficult population to serve (Helge, 1984b).

Related Educational Theory and Policy

A school, as an organization, can be described in terms of a social system, with the potential for social reform (Singer & Butler, 1987). Systems theory acknowledges the interactive relationship between an organization and its environment (Easton, 1979). While

the strength of environmental influences on organizational behavior has been debated through organizational ecology theory (Meyer, 1978), theorists generally agree that organizational presence is dependent on this environmental relationship (Aldrich, 1979; Pfeffer, 1982). Interdependent relationships within the organizational system (Thompson, 1967), whether or not demonstrating direct causality in their educational applications (Weick, 1976), determine the functions of the school as an organization. Giving attention to community elements in the environment has led to the inclusion of cultural considerations in social systems theory (Getzels, Lipham & Campbell, 1968; Getzels & Thelen, 1969), and viewing the school as a social system has provoked further reflection of the impact of culture on student learning (Getzels, 1978).

The analysis of policy designed to effect social and organizational change has been traced historically and includes analysis of programs which resulted from policy initiatives, and analysis of the relationship between policy and practice. The current generation of policy analysis is concerned with the integration of the actions of policy makers from the systems perspective,

with the actions of the implementor at the microlevel (McLaughlin, 1987). McLaughlin advocated a view of policy as a process with its influence on practice occurring over time. Policy has also been seen as a function of bargaining and negotiating occurring within a fluid implementation system. Policy outcomes then depend on individual decisions which, based upon a developmental theory of implementation, depend on the particular stage of implementation being viewed (McLaughlin, 1987). Although the importance of the micro level of analysis was highlighted, the micro-focus was the implementor, not the intended beneficiary of the policy mandate.

The development of public policy to change conditions for students with handicapping conditions began with grass-roots parental opposition to current district education practices for students with disabilities (Budoff, 1975). Since its development, special education policy has been examined in relation to other federal policies designed to achieve educational equity (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). From a systems perspective, P.L.94-142 was assessed as positively transforming practices and attitudes for students with disabilities

at the state and local level, allowing schools to be positive agents of social reform (Singer & Butler, 1987). In contrast, from other perspectives, the creation of a separate educational policy for students with disabilities has created a separate and unequal educational system (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987).

It has also been argued that the identification of students with mild handicapping conditions and their integration into regular education programs were greatly influenced by state level educational conditions including funding sources, characteristics of the school-age population and personnel preparation programs in special education (Noel & Fuller, 1985). Brinker and Thorpe (1985) agreed that it was state level influences and conditions which also shaped the day of the student with severe disabilities. The systems change strategies which developed were initiated from these upper administrative levels (Heggelund, Haring, Lynch, Pruess, Soltman & Zodrow, 1985). However, to ensure the success of the system change efforts, the process deliberately included important actors at a lower level of implementation, i.e. teachers. Although these studies highlighted the relationship between policy and

practice, they restricted the examination of the policy/practice exchange at the level of the teacher as implementor. Smith's (1983) study of young adults with disabilities who were receiving employment services advocated a focus on the individual in special education policy research, saying

> . . . it is here, at the level of the individual, that policy considerations must begin. If focusing the study itself on the local or "action" level has the advantage of making it possible to see how policy actually works, it also has an even greater advantage. It provides the lens through which we can look at the young people who live with the handicaps referred to in the legislation intended to serve their cause, and their parents, teachers, friends and employers (p. ii).

Street-Level Bureaucracy

The impact of policy traditionally has been examined in hierarchical fashion from top (maker) to bottom (implementor). However, Lipsky (1976, 1980) challenged this traditional approach to policy analysis by arguing that services prescribed by policy were circumscribed by the actions of the implementor when meeting the needs of

those who were the target of policy, thus creating new policy. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) asserted:

> Now the lowest levels of the policy chain are regarded as the makers of policy and the higher level of decision making is seen as circumscribing . . . the lower-level policy making context. The relationship between the development and implementation of policy is of necessity problematic since, in a sense, the meaning of policy cannot be known until it is worked out in practice at the street level (p. 173).

The local adaptation of special education policy by the implementor, or "street-level bureaucrat", was necessary to manage the conflict which resulted when attempting to meet the individual needs of all children as the policy required. Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) emphasized the school response to state level policy. They focused on the ". . . tension between individualization and mass process" (p. 182). They went on to conclude ". . . it is not unique; it is characteristic of many street-level bureaucracies which attempt to reconcile individualized service with high

demand, relative to resources. Since street-level bureaucracies, particularly schools, may not officially restrict intake; other means must be found to accommodate the 'work load'" (p. 182). The street-level bureaucrats sought equal, efficient and cost effective services by manipulating the referral and evaluation process. They could not meet the demand, so they rationed services. They had to balance what was required of them with available resources.

The unit of analysis in street-level bureaucracy theory is the interaction between the local implementors and the target of policy, focusing specifically on administrative procedures. The initial writings were generated from research in urban, low socioeconomic class settings (Lipsky, 1976). In the application of street-level bureaucracy theory to special education policy (Weatherley, 1979; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977) the context of policy was construed as the history of related policy and procedures. Weatherley (1979) briefly considered procedural issues with the urban poor. But the community and cultural context of policy was not the focus of the investigation and it did not include nonurban settings.

The additional study of special education implementation by Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) took place in three school districts, located in the large suburbs of Boston, with less than 10% minority representation. The districts were deliberately selected on the criteria of high community wealth to control for implementation bias against school districts with less resources. In Weatherley's (1979) report of the same study, implementation discrepancies between the affluent and the poor students were highlighted. Weatherley found that disparities among school districts in meeting the needs of students with special needs were directly related to the wealth of the states and school districts. Additional points he emphasized relative to socioeconomic class and policy included the following:

1. State equalization formulas failed to eliminate the wealthy/poor disparity. Wealthier districts continued to obtain more funds than poor districts.

2. Wealthier districts can commit more staff time and other resources to obtain additional funding from grants.

3. Special education funding is typically based on

the number of students served and does not account for disparities in local funding supports. Thus wealthier districts receive the same dollar per pupil amount as poorer school districts.

4. Parent and advocacy groups are concentrated in urban settings and are comprised predominantly of middle-class professional families. These parents are more skilled in knowing how to obtain and use the variety of public services and agencies available to them in their local communities. Alternative services are much more prevalent in urban communities.

5. Due process and appeal procedures were used most often by affluent families.

6. School personnel followed the procedures more closely if the parent was more wealthy. School personnel were more likely to acquiesce to the demands of parents who had a high probability of challenging their decisions.

7. Poor students were more likely to be labeled as mentally retarded, which was more stigmatizing than the more label of learning disability commonly assigned to more affluent students.

8. It is much easier for affluent districts to recruit and retain special personnel in both quantity and quality.

Weatherley also observed that the bias against poorer children was not deliberate, but was an inevitable outcome of the street-level bureaucrat's need to allocate limited time and resources in the mass processing of persons.

A recent field study which explored special education policy in practice for poor, rural students with severe disabilities (Capper, 1988a) sought answers to the following questions:

1. What does the rural student with severe disabilities do in his/her school day? How does the content of the day compare among rural areas, given that federal and state policy implementation was required to be universal?

2. What issues were apparent in the rural school and community environments, which may have shaped the student's day?

3. How may the historical process of implementing special education policy for the student, have

influenced the content of the student's day?

Qualitative research methodology guided the inquiry. Participant-observation and informal interviews were the primary methods of measurement when three, poor students with severe disabilities in three rural school districts were observed. Corroborative information gathered from the district and community during pre- and post-observation days, was obtained through observation, informal interviewing, demographic data questionnaires and document analysis. The school district selection was based on principles of multi-site policy research (Firestone & Herriott, 1984), and on Spradley's (1980) criteria for selecting a social situation in which to conduct participant-observation. Low socioeconomic class was determined by the number of families below the poverty line, population sparsity, and unemployment rates. The data were analyzed using the four stages of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of single and cross-site qualitative data analysis. The data revealed a country road-level bureaucracy, and suggested themes characterizing (a) the activities of the students in their school day (the product of policy), (b) aspects in the student's school setting

which may have influenced the day (the context of policy), and (c) the decisions in the students' education history which were influenced by special education policy (the process of implementing policy).

The Policy Recipient As the Maker of Policy

In rural settings, children with severe disabilities are a low incident disability. They are a unique case among the other more mild disability areas. They most often need more comprehensive, technological specific services than the "generic" special education services usually provided. For example, the evaluation that is mandated by law most often cannot be completed entirely by rural school district personnel. A rural school psychologist typically does not have the skills, training, or equipment necessary to conduct a comprehensive evaluation with a child who has multiple disabilities. Once a child is identified, a teacher with special training in preacademic skill acquisition is required. Specialists needed to carry out other parts of the program, such as physical therapists and occupational therapists are often not available, and special arrangements need to be made for these services. Often special transportation, or transportation

adaptations are necessary because many students with severe disabilities also have physical impairments. Special equipment such as an augmentative communication device may be necessary for their learning.

Children with mild disabilities, can usually be channeled through the mass processing system to receive special education services, as described by Weatherley and Lipsky (1977). But the child with severe disabilities is an anomaly in the special service system. Because of the greater resources needed, and the pressure this puts on local school districts, the extent to which P.L. 94-142 provisions are applied vary according to the kind and amount of influence that can be mobilized in behalf of the child (Capper, 1988b). Therefore, in the country road-level bureaucracy, as administrators attempt to meet individual needs, policy is shaped or created by each individual child with a severe disability.

External influences which supported the child as policy maker, included parents, child advocates, and preschool services. Sometimes parents independently obtained services for their child from the district. But the fact that some parents successfully negotiated

changes for their own child rarely resulted in other children with special needs benefitting from such a change.

A second influence on policy implementation was access to a child advocate. In this study, advocate support opened the door for a child with severe disabilities to attend school, and shaped the student planning meeting in terms of its composition, number of team members present at meetings, the frequency of meetings, and the kind of records kept at the meetings. However, the role of the advocate seemed to benefit only the child who was directly represented. For example, when one student no longer had an advocate, she did not receive speech therapy, but other students with less severe speech problems who had advocates, were scheduled for therapy.

Preschool intervention, a third influence for child services, significantly influenced the first level of special education policy mandates, the evaluation. The influence of preschool affected evaluations with regard to the personnel who conducted the evaluations, the age the student was evaluated, the number of evaluations conducted, the comprehensiveness of evaluation reports,

and the method of communicating results to the parents. However, because of weak or virtually nonexistent links between evaluations, program development, and classroom planning in the transition from preschool to public school services, the variability in evaluations did not result in remarkable differences in the students' school days. That is, significant differences in the quality and quantity of evaluations and assessments for these students resulted in relatively similar school days for them.

The Country Road-Level Bureaucrat Response to Policy

From its inception, P.L.94-142 was designed to meet, the current needs of all students with disabilities, be they rural or urban (Budoff, 1975). Because the law did not take into account the rural context for students with severe disabilities, P.L.94-142 was developed, mandated and monitored under a set of urban-based assumptions about what exactly constituted educational reality for these students. P.L.94-142 mandates encouraged country road-level bureaucrats to apply such procedures developed in an urban reality in their rural locales, which had quite different dimensions. First, the mandate shifted the country road-level bureaucrat's

emphasis away from exploring exactly what constituted local policy that was currently in existence for students with severe disabilities. Second, P.L. 94-142 encouraged country road-level bureaucrats to overlook the potential assets and resources available in their local communities, and to seek state or federally defined solutions to urban-defined problems in educating rural students with severe special needs.

Ignore Existing Rural Policy

Berkeley (1988) contends that even if no formal policy exists in a situation, an informal policy is present and influential. Berkeley states "the absence of policy can, and usually does, indicate the way a particular issue is treated. This absence is considered policy" (p. 3). Thus, rural policy for students with severe disabilities was formally developed, mandated and monitored without first assessing the content of existing policy in the rural community for these persons.

The capstone of the law is a civil rights concern to meet the special educational needs of students in the "least restrictive environment." The law was designed, in part, to end the exclusion and segregation in

institutions and private schools of students with disabilities (Biklen, 1981; Bricker & Filler, 1985). However, prior to P.L.94-142, in rural areas, students with special needs who did go to school, primarily attended with their typical peers in regular and remedial programs (Helge, 1984b). Most students with severe disabilities remained at home, while a few students were placed in local nursing homes or regional institutions.

While P.L.94-142 increased services to students with disabilities in rural areas, (Helge, 1984b), in order to comply with components of the mandate, including the identification and placement procedures, the majority of these students were pulled from regular classrooms and placed in more segregated environments, including self-contained or resource room programs to receive services. After P.L. 94-142 was passed, rural students with severe disabilities sometimes were not served, placed in institutions, served several hours a week by an uncertified teacher in home-bound services, or placed in newly created self-contained, segregated classrooms (OSERS, 1987). In an attempt to comply with the service requirements of the policy, the least restrictive

environment concept was ignored.

Emulate Urban Services

The country road-level bureaucrats in this study went to great lengths to meet the requirements of P.L. 94-142 by emulating the service delivery models used in urban areas. Urban models historically have operated under the assumption that grouping students with special learning needs is somehow more effective. It was relatively easy for urban districts to experiment with this model, since sufficient numbers of such students could usually be found in the larger schools. Thus grouping of students became the norm. The rural districts scrambled to implement this urban model by developing an entirely new and separate transportation system and setting aside separate space for the students. Special buses were purchased, drivers and bus aides were hired, and additional space was created within the existing school, or with the addition of a separate modular unit outside the building. It was not determined whether student grouping was truly cost-effective. More importantly, it was not determined if students were truly gaining more in their education by being bused across the county to a classroom with other

students with special needs.

In attempting to provide special equipment and services for students with intensive learning needs, these rural school administrators neglected to furnish them with the materials and services available to all other students. Adequate materials, qualified teachers, access to information about the school for parents, and opportunities to interact with other students represent just a few of the components of a non-disabled student's school experience. Country road-level bureaucrats did not consider what educational opportunities were currently available for all students in their districts and did not ensure that, as a beginning, students with severe disabilities were provided these same opportunities.

Policy Outcomes of Country Road-Level Bureaucracies

The outcome of policy in a poor, rural environment was determined by the implementation decisions of the country road-level bureaucrats. The outcomes can be considered both at the organizational or systems level as state policy is implemented through local channels, and at the individual student level in the school.

Systemic Outcomes: Personnel

Among Helge's (1984a) list of rural environmental variables to consider in program planning, those most salient to this study were staffing for services and the expertise of available personnel. The lack of certified personnel was cited by one administrator as "the worst problem" plaguing rural districts in meeting the demands of special education policy. This problem was exemplified in these rural districts by the emergency certification of teachers who had no training or experience in working with students with severe disabilities, and by high teacher turnover. In addition, because one district employed only one teacher in this certification area, some students would have the same teacher for all 12-15 years of their education. The availability of qualified personnel was inextricably linked to student identification rates, state funding support, location of student placements, and university training programs.

In theory, states were to receive enough federal funding to support a substantial proportion of the excess cost of educating up to 12% of the student

population with special needs. However, special education placement rates in these students' counties, were far below 12%. District 1 had placed 8.5% of its students in special education, District 2 had identified 9.5%, and District 3 had only 5.0% of its school-aged students placed in special education. The administrators in these three districts readily acknowledged that there were enough students in need of special education in each district to comprise at least 12% of their student population. One administrator affirmed he could easily fill 10% of the total student population or 400 "slots" in special education. He stated, however, that if he identified more students, he would have to serve them, and he was unable to recruit the personnel needed for that purpose.

Another administrator had conducted nationwide searches for personnel, and felt that one solution to the problem was encouraging local, regularly certified personnel to become certified in special education, or, in his words, nurturing "home grown" personnel. Others saw local recruiting as "second best" because "regular education people drop into special education for lack of jobs. . . the quality of the teachers goes down. . .

they are very mediocre, because special education was not their first choice."

One administrator believed that the work of child advocates in the area and rigid state certification requirements discouraged teachers from seeking to be certified in special education. A teacher, however, argued that other circumstances in the rural setting discouraged teachers from wanting to begin or to continue their teaching career with students with severe disabilities. These circumstances included:

> The lack of space. . . our rooms are so small. . . the district says they have no money, therefore, we cannot buy materials. . . We have no supervision or support out here. . . the only time supervisors come out is when there is a visitor or when a child advocate is involved. . . There are just too many kids to do a good job. . . we do not feel we accomplish anything. . . There is just too much paperwork and legal stuff to deal with.

The country road-level bureaucrats agreed that funding inadequacies were the most pervasive problem impairing their ability to serve rural students with

special needs, and that additional funding could help them lure qualified personnel into the area. The administrators felt urban districts received more than their fair share of resources, especially in the allocation of state special education units to the districts to pay teachers' salaries. (A special education "unit" consisted of salary for one teacher.) If the state did not provide the funding for the unit, support for that teacher's salary came totally from local funds. The previous year, one district had requested 24 units of state funding, but received only 21 units. The state expected the local district to pay for the other three units. However, the local district, struggling financially, did not allocate funds to pay for the other three units of salary. As a result, approximately 30 students, who would have received services remained unserved.

A second district requested 28 units of state funding, but received only one unit. This same administrator reported that an urban county one third their size had received 82 units. She lamented, however, that even if they had received funding for the number of teachers needed, the lack of space for those

teachers and students would be the next problem. In her district, only 6 out of 21 teachers had regular-sized classrooms. Stage space and modular units were also in use.

The availability of personnel affected the placement alternatives for students; student placement was dependent on the available personnel. For example, one student's placement report stated the following: "She needs placement in [a] severely handicapped room where behavior management could be used to a great extent. . . It was determined though that this alternative wasn't in the best interests of your child because there is no such room in the area."

And another year the IEP reported:

> We considered an alternate to TMH (trainable mentally handicapped), severely handicapped room, but it was determined though that this alternative wasn't in the best interests of your child because a room for the severely handicapped, is not available.

Another student record reflected a similar placement situation: "[Tiffany] will remain in this unit because there is nothing else available for her."

If a district was fortunate enough to recruit a teacher from within the state, these teachers often found themselves inadequately prepared to teach in a disadvantaged rural setting. A graduate of a regional institution of higher education whose service area included the rural area where he was currently teaching felt the preservice program fell far short of the rural realities surrounding the university. He stated:

> . . . the colleges need to teach 'reality'. They do not prepare you. They only get you ready for urban areas. They have us do our student teaching in urban schools, where you have access to resource centers for materials, etc. . . we were not taught anything about legalities and due process because they told us we would never have a case.

Microlevel Outcomes: The Student

The two most prominent themes describing policy outcomes of country road-level bureaucracies at the student level were a dearth of instruction and student isolation. In one site, the student's activities during the day could be grouped into three main areas:

sleeping, eating, and watching television. She had no instructional activities, slept most of the day, was disinterested in instructional materials and had no opportunities for achievement.

The student in site 2 spent about 36% of her day on instructional activities and was engaged in meal time 17% of her time. Over 46% of her school day was spent in sitting, self-stimulating, unattended play, peer interaction, and toileting. The student did not participate actively in her day, sitting idle when she was alone, and her school tasks were completed with a great deal of assistance by the aide. In addition, the activities in the student's day were unrelated, fragmented, and repetitive.

In the third site, the student spent over half of her day at both meal/snack times and recess/free time. This time, combined with academic time (25%), accounted for over 80% of her school day. The remainder of the day was spent in non-directed activities such as waiting or sitting.

A second theme resulting from the decisions of the country road-level bureaucrats in the activities of the students' days was one of isolation. This student

isolation was a result of few opportunities for peer interaction. Although the student in site one was in a classroom with seven other students with disabilities, she was alone over 75% of her day. In the self-contained classroom, she was assigned to a corner, separated from the other students by low bookshelves and cabinets. The second student was the only elementary aged student in her middle and high school-level classroom. She spent nearly 54% of her day alone within her classroom, and less than 45% of her day in the presence of her older classmates with disabilities. The student in site 3 was alone over 58% of her day. Although the primary concern of her mother was ". . . her ability to communicate with others, especially peers. . ," the student only spent fifty minutes (14%) of her day with typical elementary students at snack and recess time.

Summary and Conclusions

Research which extends the unit of analysis from the policy implementor to the target of policy, and considers the cultural context of the policy, can reveal emerging theoretical propositions surrounding social policy implementation with persons who could be

considered the outcasts of the under-class. First, the discrepancy between the extreme needs of particular policy recipients, and the limitations of available resources in the policy context, results in the recipient of policy actually being the shaper and maker of policy. It is then the extent of the external support for the recipient which determines the degree of influence the receiver of policy will have on policy development and implementation.

Second, the country road-level bureaucrat's response to policy in a disadvantaged environment simultaneously includes ignorng current related rural policies and attempting to emulate urban models of service delivery. The results of this response to policy at the country road-level, are systemic negative affects in terms of the unavailability of personnel to implement the policy which, in turn, at the microlevel, renders a less than meaningful school day for the child.

A new federal law, P.L. 99-457 (Amendments to the Education of the Handicapped Act: New Federal Preschool Program) has been passed which requires that states serve all children with disabilities, ages 3-5 by Fall, 1990. The law is nearly identical to P.L. 94-142 in its

procedural requirements and intent. It specifically emphasizes the role of the family in child intervention. The law does not contain considerations for students and families in poverty settings. From the inception of P.L. 99-457, policy makers and administrators who will implement the law should be aware of the potential impact of policy on the school days of poor preschool children with severe disabilities and their families, and the needs of school districts with larger numbers of low socioeconomic class students. In addition, a consideration of policy context and of the implementation process in disadvantaged, non-urban settings, can aid the development of sound social policy to be sensitive and appropriate for all persons, regardless of their socioeconomic class, disability, ethnicity, or geographic location.

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